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SUBJECT: EU POLITICAL DIRECTORS TROIKA MEETING FINDS COMMON
GROUND ON OTHER ISSUES

Classified By: CDA Maryruth Coleman for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

¶1. (C) At the January 11 U.S. - EU Troika meeting, A/S Fried and EU Presidency, Council, and Commission representatives generally found common ground on Afghanistan, Ukraine, Belarus, and Burma. On Iran, the EU advised that even a weak UNSCR would help pave the way for stronger EU sanctions. The EU officials also expressed support for the MEPP. End Summary.

Afghanistan - Stronger Coordination and Cooperation Needed

¶2. (C) A/S Fried informed the EU Troika that the U.S. had engaged in intense discussions with President Karzai and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon regarding the appointment of

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Paddy Ashdown as the overall coordinator in Afghanistan. He stated that counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan had not been as successful as hoped, noting that poppy production in several key provinces had been increasing recently. He emphasized that in the run-up to the Bucharest NATO summit, the U.S. would be looking to NATO allies to increase their contributions to the effort in Afghanistan. He also stated that the U.S. supported the EU police mission in Afghanistan and was providing space at regional centers throughout the country for use by the EU mission. A/S Fried recognized that it would be difficult to surmount some of the "theological" differences in Afghanistan between the EU and NATO and therefore we should work together pragmatically on the ground to resolve outstanding issues.

¶3. (C) Slovenian Political Director Drobnic replied that the EU recognized the need to resolve serious problems in Afghanistan and was very concerned about the apparent inability of the Karzai government to address the deteriorating situation. Drobnic emphasized the importance of the EU police mission and stated that the EU hoped it would be fully operational within six months. Regarding problems of NATO - EU cooperation, Drobnic agreed that in the absence of a legal solution we needed to look for practical answers. He pledged to work with Turkey to address these problems. Robert Cooper, EU Council Secretariat Director General for External and Politico-Military Affairs, noted

that the Secretariat had not yet received any formal notification regarding the possible appointment of Lord Ashdown and therefore had not yet addressed the issue. Nevertheless, the Secretariat agreed with the principle of unity of command and would likely support a "supreme coordinator." Regarding Turkey, Cooper inquired whether the U.S. believed that this was the appropriate time to fully engage Turkey in resolving the EU/NATO compatibility issue or would it be a waste of valuable "ammo"? If it was not the right time, Cooper agreed that we should not try to solve the entire problem but simply deal with issues on the ground as they arise. A/S Fried replied that he would check on Turkey, but noted that President Bush and Secretary Rice had positive meetings with Turkish President Abdullah Gul and that this might be a good time for more active U.S. engagement with Turkey on the Cyprus question.

Ukraine/Belarus - Ukraine Good, Belarus Bad

14. (C) A/S Fried highlighted the progress the GOU is making regarding WTO membership. Noting that there were only a few unresolved matters for Ukraine to address with the WTO, A/S Fried reiterated the U.S. stance that Ukrainian WTO membership must be based on its merits and not be held captive to Russia's membership status or vice versa. Regarding Belarus, A/S Fried noted that there was little new in the GOB's attitude or actions. He stated that the U.S. agreed with the EU position that we should ask President Alexander Lukashenko to release political prisoners and reengage with the GOB if this occurred, but we needed to stick to conditions that have been set for engagement.

15. (C) Drobnic noted that U.S. and EU objectives for both Ukraine and Belarus were the same, although perhaps the

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methods differed somewhat. The EU shared U.S. views on the Orange Coalition and believed that Ukraine was striving for a European perspective. As for Belarus, the EU still supported the two-track approach of restrictive measures combined with engagement. Although the EU was not optimistic regarding political progress in Belarus, it was ready to strengthen cooperation with the U.S. in this area.

16. (C) Helga Schmid, Director of High Representative Javier Solana's Policy Unit, expressed frustration with Belarus, but noted that incremental progress had been made on political prisoners and the OSCE. Schmid mentioned, however, that new crackdowns had occurred and also expressed concern about recent Belarusian threats to expel the U.S. Ambassador. Schmid promised to raise it with the Belarusian ambassador to the EU.

17. (C) Regarding Ukraine, Schmid expressed satisfaction with the elections, noting that turnout was high and that the electorate displayed greater maturity than the politicians. She stated that the West needed to continue to press Ukraine on constitutional reform, but we should also recognize that internal problems between Yukashenko and Tymoshenko persist.

18. (C) Karel Kovanda, EU Commission Deputy Director General, noted that the EU and Ukraine had held five serious and productive sessions under their Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Kovanda agreed with A/S Fried's point on Ukraine's WTO accession and stated that as soon as Ukraine joined, the EU would be ready to begin free trade area negotiations. He also highlighted the recent visa facilitation agreement and noted that by taking some shortcuts, the Commission had succeeded in implementing the agreement by the end of 2007. Regarding Belarus, Kovanda stated that despite the difficulties with the GOB, the Commission has succeeded in maintaining contacts at mid-level, thereby spreading the gospel on democracy, human rights, trade, etc. Lukashenko agreed last year to allow the Commission to establish a delegation in Minsk, and Kovanda

hoped that would actually occur this year.

Middle East Peace Process - EU Supports the U.S. Show

¶9. (C) French Political Director Girard Araud opened with a statement of strong support for the U.S. initiative begun in Annapolis, noting that it was the "only game in town." He stated that the EU was ready for full political engagement with both Israel and the Palestinians and to commit concrete aid to support an agreement. He mentioned that the EU welcomed recent U.S. statements on Israeli settlements, but emphasized the EU stance that Israel's settlement policy only served as an impediment to peace and must stop. He stated that the EU will follow the U.S. lead on this issue.

¶10. (C) Cooper noted that time did not work in our favor in the Middle East and speculated that this could be the last chance to realize a two state solution. He stated that the Council would focus on security projects in the Palestinian territories at their next meeting.

¶11. (C) Kovanda raised the fact that the Commission had committed approximately 550 million euros to social, economic, and governmental development projects and was initiating a new instrument, PEGAS, to implement these programs. He asked if the U.S. would consider PEGAS as a mechanism for transferring the approximately USD 550 million it had committed to the region.

¶12. (C) A/S Fried said that he did not know if this was the last chance for a two state solution, but that we should behave as though it were. He noted that President Bush is very committed to the peace process and that it was the single most important issue for Secretary Rice. A/S Fried stated that the current Palestinian Authority was the best we had ever seen and we needed to take full advantage of the present opportunity. He assured the EU reps that we had sent Israel strong signals regarding settlements.

Iran - No Reason for Optimism

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¶13. (C) Cooper stated that despite serious attempts at negotiation this past autumn, Iran had showed no interest and so the EU had been moving forward with sanctions. He stated that the EU was not thrown off by the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran's nuclear program because it actually confirmed their view that Iran's program had primarily military objectives. Cooper advised that the EU would like to see the UN Security Council (UNSC) pass a resolution, even a fairly weak one, because it would facilitate the passage of further EU sanctions. He stated that any UNSC resolution against Iran would send a signal of protest from the entire world rather than just the west. With such backing, the EU could then quietly add additional pain via EU sanctions. Araud expressed concern that the Iranians might believe that they would get a better deal from the next U.S. administration. Both Cooper and the French representative stated that even if the U.S. decided to negotiate with Iran, we would meet with great resistance from the Iranians, as anti-Americanism in some ways constituted the regime's "raison d'etre."

¶14. (C) A/S Fried expressed interest in the EU's capacity to support any UNSC resolution package with additional measures. He agreed that the passage of a third sanctions resolution is key. He also noted that it would be a serious mistake for the Iranians to believe that the next administration, Democrat or Republican, would take a softer stance on Iran.

Human Rights/Burma - EU Shares U.S. Concerns Over Backsliding

¶15. (C) A/S Fried expressed appreciation for the EU's swift work on a joint statement on Burma in September. He also noted that the U.S. was very concerned that the Burmese regime was not cooperating with the international community and that therefore the Gambari mission might be losing relevance. He mentioned that the U.S. would like to see the EU tighten financial sanctions on Burma. A/S Fried stressed, however, that care needed to be taken to avoid inadvertently creating additional difficulties for the people of Burma.

¶16. (C) Drobnic agreed that the apparent return of equilibrium in Burma could present a danger to progress. Citing the need to introduce democratic processes to Burma, Drobnic stated that the EU was considering launching an effort to have the opposition included in the drafting of a new constitution. Addressing the difficult humanitarian situation, Drobnic affirmed that the EU would continue to provide humanitarian assistance in Burma.

¶17. (C) Cooper stated that although UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari was not a big proponent of additional sanctions, there would be pressure within the EU to increase sanctions. However, Cooper noted that the EU was not a big player in Burma and therefore did not have great leverage. Although the Chinese would have to play a bigger role, Cooper stated they had been increasingly more constructive and have been more helpful than the Indians.

¶18. (C) In response to A/S Fried's question regarding the date that the EU's ban on Burmese timber and gems will take effect, Kovanda stated that the ban should become effective within a few weeks, although he questioned how effective it will be. More effective, he speculated, would be a UN weapons ban on Burma, although he noted that such a ban would certainly encounter problems with players such as Russia, China, Israel, and Ukraine.

Further Issues on the Transatlantic Agenda

¶19. (C) Drobnic stressed the importance that the EU Presidency placed upon the transatlantic relationship, noting that it was based not only upon common interests but also upon common values. The Presidency wanted to strengthen the relationship through intense dialogue during the coming six months and was looking forward to the culmination of this discourse at the EU-U.S. Summit in June. Drobnic highlighted three areas in which the Presidency hoped to see progress: economic cooperation, regional issues, and climate change. He also mentioned that the Presidency hoped to have a Foreign Minister Troika meeting in February.

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¶20. (C) Cooper stated that it was time to start shaping the agenda for the Summit and singled out climate change as an area of intense focus for this presidency. He acknowledged that the U.S. and the EU did not entirely agree on climate change, but he recognized recent progress and said that he hoped for a strong message to come out of the Summit.

¶21. (C) Kovanda declared the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC) to be one of the most important results of the 2007 Summit and expressed hope that further progress would be made in the run-up and during this year's Summit. He also mentioned Commission concerns regarding U.S. legislation on 100% shipping container scanning requirement, the need for commitment on a full trade agreement, and the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Kovanda stressed that the Commission was very concerned about shipping scanning requirements and was committed to helping convince Congress that a change to this requirement was necessary to avoid a negative impact on trade. He stated that although a full trade agreement would not solve all problems, it could ease and simplify trade links. Regarding VWP, Kovanda requested an update - especially regarding Greece - and expressed hope for

inclusion of the Central European countries by the EU-U.S. Summit.

¶22. (C) A/S Fried stated that the Balkans, Kosovo, and the Middle East peace process would likely dominate the Summit, although he expressed hope that Kosovo would be resolved by June. He agreed that energy security and climate change would definitely be on the agenda and noted that the U.S. and the EU had moved much closer to each other on the issue and that the Summit should record this progress. Similarly, there had been great progress on the TEC and the Summit would be an excellent opportunity to show the results. A/S Fried pointed out that success on Kosovo, the ESDP mission, and other related issues would be a huge achievement and be well recognized at the Summit. A/S Fried closed by stating that the U.S. wants a strong EU because a strong EU was good for all the regional issues that face us today and was good for NATO.

¶23. (U) DAS Garber, on behalf of A/S Fried and EUR, and USEU Brussels PolCounselor Larry Wohlers have cleared this cable.
COLEMAN